

Allow electronic transmission (fax & email) of blank absentee ballots to troops and their family members stationed overseas –something already done in more than 30 states.

Providing timely absentee ballots to any voter is critical, but with the military it is often very challenging to send a ballot in a timely manner to an overseas military base in sufficient time for the ballot to be returned by Election Day. The need to expedite the absentee process for our military is not only essential, but also long overdue.

Currently, military personnel have two options to *expedite* their voting: First they can vote by using a Federal Write-In Ballot. This format has two limitations: 1) The voter is only allowed to vote for the office of president and senator; and 2) The voter must have a current absentee request on file. Second, the Federal Postcard (FPCA) provides another format for military voters. It allows the military to automatically receive a ballot for two federal election cycles, but often our military personnel move within that time period and unless we are notified, we have no way of getting the ballot to the correct address. Even contacting the military websites and 800 numbers for current addresses precludes accuracy in many instances. Military transfers to different bases often occur after an absentee ballot request has been submitted. By the time we receive the updated base information, processing a ballot to be mailed and returned by Election Day is almost impossible. Mailing systems overseas are not as reliable as the US Postal System in terms of delivery. Returns can vary from three days to three weeks, depending on the country. Therefore, accurate mailing addresses and insufficient time to send and return ballots remain constant problems that disenfranchise some of our military voters.

The long address and mailing turnaround time could be eliminated if there was an electronic and fax format for the military to cast their votes. Just as we now duplicate a Federal Write-In Ballot to a paper absentee ballot for processing, we could also duplicate an electronic ballot to a paper absentee ballot for processing.

Bloomfield Township strives to serve our military in a fast and efficient manner. During the Presidential Election in November 2008, we mailed over 300 ballots with a return rate of 92 percent. All ballots were mailed in specially designated military ballot envelopes and were given highest priority at the bulk-mailing center. Application requests within three weeks of Election Day were mailed using express mail service. Federal write-in ballots were also an option for military personnel. While a 92 percent return rate is exceptional, we want the return rate from our troops to be 100% and to do that I am advocating the following solution:

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